

The plan

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS GUIDE

KICK START YOUR FITNESS WITH THIS FOUR-WEEK PLAN FOR FIRST-TIME TRIATHLETES

Meet the expert

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EVERYONE HAS to start somewhere, even world champions like Alistair Brownlee. So if you're completely new to triathlon this is the best place to be. This four-week training plan is designed to get you into the swing of regular swim, bike and run training so you can soon start calling yourself a fully-fledged triathlete.

It will help you build a solid fitness foundation so that by the end of it, you'll be in an ideal position to try any one of the race-specific training plans we publish every month in *Triathlon Plus* and our articles on *Triradar.com*. In fact, in next month's issue we'll even be giving away a

free beginners supplement and a training plan that would be ideal for you after completing this one, to take you to your first tri race.

Anyone who's reasonably fit and healthy can try this plan, but it's always a good idea to get a check up from a doctor if you're not 100% sure. And if you find the training too hard, please don't give up straight away. Try halving or even quartering the distances for four weeks, and then increase them gradually from there until you can manage the full amount. These sessions shouldn't kill you, so just reduce them if they're too hard. It's not a contest to see how much you can punish yourself.

If you come from an individual swimming, cycling or running background, it's not a bad idea to use this training plan to gradually build up your experience of the other two disciplines. For example, if you're a runner, use these swimming and cycling workouts and stick with your existing run training.

Need to know

SWIM

The quickest way to improve your swimming is to invest in one-to-one lessons, so you don't waste hours reinforcing bad technique later on. Get yourself some swim toys too. Start off with a pull-buoy, which goes between your thighs to help your legs float, and a float that you hold out in front of you to practise your kicking. You'll also need a good pair of goggles that don't steam up or leak, and a swimming costume that doesn't flap about or restrict your stroke. Start your swim training in a local pool where they have separate lanes for serious swimmers (that's you!) preferably when it's quiet.

BIKE

You don't need a posh racing bike at this stage – any safe and functional bike will do

as long as it fits you properly. You'll need a helmet, mitts and padded cycling shorts too. There's a lot to get your head around when you first start cycling, like maintenance, punctures, changeable weather and finding quiet routes. Even the hard saddle will take a few weeks to get used to. All these things get easier in time, so be patient.

RUN

The key thing when you start running is moderation. Too much too soon, and you'll get injured within a matter of weeks. Two or three runs a week is plenty. You don't have to be breathing hard or feeling totally knackered for it to be effective training. Chill out, walk a bit, and you'll gradually improve over the weeks and months, without succumbing to injury.



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WEEK 01

Mon	Run 15mins as run 1 minute, walk 1 minute Notes Make sure you start out with proper running shoes. Most running shops will recommend the best shoes for you, based on an analysis of your gait
Tue	Swim 16x25m as (alternating 25m FC, 25m KICK, 25m BREAST, 25m PULL) +20sec rests Notes I'll be using various abbreviations in these swim sets, so check out the KEY at the bottom of the page
Wed	Rest day Don't be tempted to train. You'll improve quicker if you take the rest days. Your body adapts to training when you rest
Thur	Bike Ride 30mins at a steady pace Notes On the flats you should be going easy enough that you can breathe easily just through your nose if you choose to
Fri	Rest day
Sat	Swim 8x25m as (alternating 25m FC, 25m BREAST) +20sec rests 4x50m as (50m KICK, 50m PULL). You can include fins, hand paddles and snorkel if your pool allows Notes If you've had swimming lessons and been given drills to practise, incorporate them into your warm up
Sun	Brick Ride 30mins at a steady pace, straight into run 10mins alternating 1min walk/1min run Notes Get your saddle height right. As a rule of thumb, when you're sitting on the saddle, you should just about be able to rest your heel on the pedal with your leg straight. Other adjustments like handlebar height, and saddle fore/aft take a bit more time, so check out some bike fitting videos on www.youtube.com

WEEK 03

Mon	Run 25mins as 1 minute run, 1 minute walk Notes You can increase the length of the runs to 90secs if you feel up to it, decreasing the walks to 30secs
Tue	Swim WU 8x25m alternating FC, BREAST +15secs rests MAIN 4x100m as (alternating 100m PULL, 100m KICK) +45secs rests WD 3x100m BREAST
Wed	Rest day
Thur	Bike Ride 1 hour at a steady pace Notes If you're getting saddle sore, try using some chamois cream or Vaseline. If that doesn't help, it may be a bike-fitting issue that's causing you problems, so seek expert help
Fri	Rest day
Sat	Swim WU 8x50m alternating FC, BREAST +20secs rests MAIN 4x100m as (alternating 100m PULL, 100m FC) +45secs rests 4x100m KICK as (alternating 25m easy, 25m hard) +30secs rests WD 4x50m BREAST
Sun	Brick Ride 50mins at a steady pace, straight into run 10mins alternating 90secs run/30secs walk Notes Buy a saddle bag for your bike. Always carry two spare innertubes, tyre levers and patches. Keep a mini pump in your back pocket

WEEK 02

Mon	Run 20mins as 1 minute run, 1 minute walk Notes You don't have to run hard. Try and run at a chatting pace. If that's impossible shorten the runs and increase the walks
Tue	Swim WU 8x25m alternating FC, BREAST +15secs rests MAIN 8x50m alternating 50m PULL, 50m KICK +30secs rests WD 4x50m BREAST Notes Ride at an easy pace, but work hard up the hills
Wed	Rest day
Thur	Bike Ride 45mins at a steady pace Notes Some of your bike rides can be off-road if you prefer
Fri	Rest day
Sat	Swim WU 8x50m alternating FC, KICK +20secs rests MAIN 8x50m PULL as 25m easy, 25m hard +30secs rests 4x50m KICK as 25m easy, 25m hard +20secs rests WD 4x50m BREAST
Sun	Brick Ride 40mins at a steady pace, straight into 10mins run, alternating 1min walk/1min run Notes Keep your tyres up at the pressure recommended on their sidewall. An upright track pump is best

WEEK 04

Mon	Run 30mins as run 90secs, walk 30secs
Tue	Swim WU 4x100m alternating FC, BREAST +30secs rests MAIN 4x100m FC as (alternating 25m hard, 25m easy) +45secs rests 4x50m hard KICK +30secs rests WD 4x100m BREAST
Wed	Rest day
Thur	Bike Ride 1 hour 15mins at a steady pace Notes Make time to practise changing your inner tube, in the event of the inevitable puncture
Fri	Rest day
Sat	Swim WU 8x50m alternating FC, BREAST +20secs rests MAIN 200m PULL +45secs rest. 8x25m sprint KICK +30secs rests 4x100m FC as (alternating 25m easy, 25m hard) +30secs rests WD 4x50m BREAST Notes We're up to 200m non-stop today (with a pull buoy)
Sun	Brick Ride 1 hour at a steady pace, straight into run 15mins alternating 90secs run/30secs walk Notes Take an easier week after this week, to allow your body to recover and adapt

KEY
WU Warm up **WD** Warm down **MAIN** Main set **FC** Front crawl **BREAST** Breaststroke **KICK** Kicking with a kick float held at arms length **PULL** Front crawl with a pull buoy between your legs